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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [TBIO](#) [SENV](#) [MZ](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT GUEBUZA ON CHOLERA THREAT AND ZIMBABWE

REF: HARARE 1076

CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE TODD CHAPMAN FOR REASONS 1.4 (B&D)

HEALTH MINISTRY WATCHING CHOLERA CAREFULLY

11. (SBU) Health Minister Ivo Garrido has sent health teams to the provinces of Gaza, Manica, Tete, Zambezia, and Niassa, bordering both Zimbabwe and Malawi, to prepare for the potential spread of a cholera epidemic across the border from Zimbabwe, saying that health authorities are on "maximum alert." While there is usually an increase in cholera cases in Mozambique during the rainy season (October through January), health officials are concerned about the implications of the epidemic in Zimbabwe spreading across the border, particularly in Manica province, which sees the most traffic from Zimbabwe along the Beira Corridor. So far, the Ministry of Health has recorded 8,079 cholera cases between 8 October 2007 and 22 November 2008, with 84 deaths, or a mortality rate of 1.04 percent. Mortality rates in one localized, remote area of northern Manica were particularly high, and overall mortality rates for the year are slightly elevated over last year's figures. It appears however, that the epidemic has not yet significantly spread across the border from Zimbabwe. A variety of actors in the health sector, including WHO, MSF, Oxfam, UNICEF, and Mission members in USAID and CDC are following the cholera issue closely.

INDEPENDENT PRESS SAYS ZIMBABWEANS WITH CHOLERA IN MOZAMBIQUE

12. (SBU) Garrido stated in the press that South African authorities have informed him that the Limpopo river, that travels from Zimbabwe, through South Africa, and into Mozambique is contaminated with cholera, which has been confirmed by independent NGOs. This downstream effect, combined with Zimbabweans crossing the border raises concern of a spreading epidemic, though no Zimbabweans with cholera have been diagnosed in Mozambique, according to official media sources, though private newspaper O Pais reported on December 4 that in Tete city, 135 cases have been reported since November, with two deaths. O Pais, also reports that in the district of Changamana, 169 cases have been registered, many of them Zimbabwean, with two deaths. Call-in TV and radio programs have widely covered concerns over a spreading Zimbabwean cholera epidemic.

CHARGE ASKS PRESIDENT ABOUT CHOLERA AND ZIMBABWE

13. (C) On December 8, the Charge joined a large group of

Chiefs of Mission from the Americas, Asia, and Europe for a working dinner with the President, and used the opportunity to ask Guebuza about regional concerns over peace and stability in Zimbabwe and the potential destabilizing effect of the growing humanitarian disaster there associated with the cholera outbreak. Guebuza responded that he was preoccupied with the issue, and called on the Zimbabwean parties to implement the September 11 Agreement as originally written. He said that he had encouraged both parties to finally resolve the disagreements over who will control the Interior Ministry, such that both can be present in the ministry to allow the agreement to be implemented. Guebuza noted that his views on Zimbabwe are accurately reflected in a recent letter that President Mbeki sent to the MDC's Tsvangirai on November 22. He assumed we had all seen this letter and promised to forward it to us (which the Foreign Ministry did the following day). Guebuza confirmed that there is growing concern in his government over the humanitarian crisis, and the potential impact of a widening cholera epidemic.

14. (C) Comment: The cholera epidemic, and its potential spread to Mozambique, seems to be causing some in Mozambique further concern about the Mugabe regime. The President's Political Advisor Renato Matusse told the Charge December 8 that they continue to look to SADC's proposed solutions as the best way to resolve the political crisis in Zimbabwe and to prevent serious violence. End Comment.
Chapman